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## COME WITH US.

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It has often been remarked by pious persons, that had they been invited, they should have joined the Church long before they did. Perhaps you have made the same observation, and yet remain at a distance from the followers of Christ.

To prove the necessity of this union, I need only refer you to the history of the Church of God in every age. Is it a fact that God has always had a people? And is it true, that this people have always been distinguished from the world around them by certain peculiar features in their character and conduct? And did all the wise and good in every age belong to this class of persons? And, more than this, did our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles act upon the same principles, and join together in one body those who believed and obeyed the gospel? If so, then what have you or I to say against such an institution? Are we wiser and holier than Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and many others who belonged to the patriarchal Church? Do we understand the necessities of man's condition better than Moses and the prophets, or have we more authority than Jesus Christ? If we find it difficult to answer these questions, then let us own the force of truth: let us confess the divine authority and perpetual obligation of Christian communion, and "come out from the ungodly, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing." 2 Cor: vi. 17.

But one of the principal reasons why we wish you to turn your attention to this subject, arises from the usefulness of Christian communion. You must allow that it is a good thing to enjoy the favor of God. Let me assure you that it is by no means unlikely that your neglect of a closer union with his Church may be one reason why the light of his countenance has not shone upon you. You have sought him, perhaps, in the closet, and have not found him. He has had something against you. You have neglected his institution. You have been identified

with the world, and have not honored him by a bold and decided separation. Look at that passage, a part of which we have quoted. He says, first, "Be ye separate;" and then, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." *You* reverse this order. You expect him to receive you first, and then you will separate yourselves. No wonder that you are disappointed. You and God are directly at issue. Be not deceived: he will not alter his word to please the taste of any man.

Observe, too, that if you thus separate yourselves, and go among the people of God, you will become the peculiar objects of pastoral care. God's ministers will watch over you as fathers over their children, and will feed you as shepherds their sheep. The members of the Church will treat you with brotherly affection. They will counsel you in difficulty, comfort you in distress, edify you by relations of their experience, sympathize with you in trouble, bear all your burdens, and kneel by you in your last moments, to commend your soul to God. Is it nothing to be thus associated with the excellent of the earth? Is it no privilege to meet them in holy brotherhood around the table of the Lord? Where else will you find such society, such enjoyments? Travel the world over, make the search, and you will return full of vexation and disappointment, wondering at your own folly. You will come back prepared and eager to acknowledge, that content and satisfaction can alone be obtained in the peaceful habitation of the Church, and in a well-principled and affectionate union with the followers of Christ. "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?" Deut. xxxiii. 29.

A connection of this kind would be a great blessing to you in the way of restraint from evil, and as affording you opportunities of exercising your talents for usefulness. You would thereby, also, participate in those special visits of mercy which Christ makes to his disciples, when they are assembled in "his name." How often does he now come into the midst of them and say, "Peace be unto you," and breathe upon them the Holy Ghost! John xx. 21, 22. If you are absent, like Thomas, you may expect

not only to lose the blessing of your Saviour, but to remain in a state of deplorable unbelief.

And now "how long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him." 1 Kings xviii. 21. An undecided state is an uncomfortable state. You cannot serve two masters; and you often *feel* that you cannot. The struggle which goes on in your breast is an evidence to you that you are attempting an impossibility. Renounce at once the service of sin. Come forth boldly on the "Lord's side;" and *this one step* will greatly relieve your mind, and prepare it to receive the blessings of the gospel.

Perhaps you say that you are not fit to join the Christian Church. Where do you expect to get better? In the world? In communion with sinners? In neglect of God's commandments and institutions? Most preposterous! Instead of becoming better, you are getting worse every day. The habit of delay is becoming permanent; the Holy Spirit is grieved; and, by and by, you will have lost your good impressions altogether. But what fitness does God require of you? It is certain you cannot be anything else than a sinner. If Jesus Christ will not refuse to receive you because you are a sinner, neither will the Christian Church. Do you feel that you are a sinner? Do you hate sin? Have you forsaken it? Do you wish to be delivered from it? Then, "thou art the man." You are as fit as ever you will be until you come to Christ. And one of the best means of conducting you to the Saviour is converse with Christian people. You are just the person whom the ministers and leaders of the Church would delight to instruct.

Do not say that you must *first* settle *this* point of secular business, or consult *that* worldly relative. Do not tell us that you must wait until some change shall occur in your earthly employment or circumstances, or until some mightier impulse of the Holy Spirit constrain you to the act. My dear friend, this is not a matter to be trifled with. Your soul is concerned in it. You do not suppose that we should have addressed you about Church communion, did we not suppose that your eternal interests were nearly related to the question. Not, it is true, to the

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question whether you belong to this or that Christian Church; but to the question, whether you have forsaken the world, taken up the cross, and followed Christ, or whether you are now mixed up with the mass of the ungodly, and therefore living apart from Christ's disciples, of whom he says, "Ye are not of the world." John xv. 19. Do not evade this inquiry. All that we seek is your salvation. Determine to arrive at the truth, though it may be painful, and you will be well repaid. O remember, I beseech you, that the "friendship of the world is enmity with God: whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." James iv. 4. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John ii. 15. You are not actuated, I hope, by the fear of man. Remember, "the fear of man bringeth a snare"—Prov. xxix. 25—a dreadful snare—a snare which entangleth the soul, and holds it in the bondage of sin and death. Be not afraid of human reproach, or displeasure, or shame; but "fear Him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." Luke xii. 5.

If you remain distinct from Christ's followers, and do nothing by open confession and manly exertion, to spread the cause of Christ in the world, will it not be to you, in old age, and on your death-bed, a source of deep regret and unavailing sorrow? Will you not be ready to say, "O fool that I was, to take up with silly excuses and weak pretences, so as to prefer the smile of the world to that of God! O wretched man! I have lost a life; I have done nothing for the benefit of souls; I stood aloof when I ought to have come up to the 'help of the Lord against the mighty.' O infatuated sinner! I now desire to go among the blest in heaven; but I have shunned communion with them on earth."

My dear friends, if you do not wish to be filled with such anxieties when you are about to enter the presence of God, then fling away every remaining objection: go upon your knees, and acknowledge your past neglects: choose at once the society of the pious: accept the invitation which we now give you, and say with those of whom Zechariah prophesied, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." viii. 23.

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